Whirltronics

Companies like Whirltronics who supply to OEMs are often beholden to those large firms for their sales growth. Yet it doesn't have to be this way. With the help of Eureka! Winning Ways, Whirltronics is regaining control over its destiny. They can already forecast that their first new idea could change their annual growth rate from single digit to double digits.

Client Profile

Whirltronics is a manufacturer of rotary lawnmower blades, located in Buffalo, Minnesota. A privately held, 30-year-old company, Whirltronics has 70 employees. Because their primary customer base is original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and they provide parts to their customers' specifications, Whirltronics' sales growth correlates to the ramping up to meet customers' newest needs, and then returning to steady state when those customers decide to produce those new parts in-house.

This ebb and flow of sales, dependent on the needs of the company's existing customers, has kept Whirltronics on a steady 3-5% average annual growth rate for several years. Eureka! Winning Ways presented Whirltronics with a possible mechanism for expanding their growth rate and their market with a model and process—with a discipline and team-approach similar to Lean—that its team could easily learn and follow for new ideas.

MEP's Initial Growth Services Offering: Eureka! Winning Ways

Building upon our success in helping manufacturers reduce their bottom-line costs through process improvements, MEP is now focusing on growth in top-line sales for manufacturers. Eureka! Winning Ways is the first of the MEP Growth Services to be introduced. Developed in partnership with Doug Hall of Eureka! Ranch in Cincinnati, Ohio, the program is the first scientifically based process to guide companies to systematically and significantly grow their businesses. Specifically, the program provides a disciplined methodology and analytical tools to create new ideas, discovery market opportunities for these ideas and efficiently drive the best ideas into development.

New Ideas and Projected Results

Both of Whirltronics initial Eureka! generated ideas, after 30 days of discovery, resulted in decisions not to proceed. However, both easily generated two new spin-off ideas and a wealth of confidence in the Whirltronics team.

The first idea is to develop a process to extend the life of the cutting edge of their blades. Giving the blades longer life will decrease the need for regular sharpening or replacement, and could be a major new product for the company and their industry. Whirltronics is exploring a variety of approaches to execute this idea and is committed to finding the solution. When it does, the company knows this new product could open doors to new accounts and new markets, as well as contribute to positive margin growth. The company envisions that this idea could turn their single digit annual growth into double-digit annual growth.

The second idea is to seek new market opportunities for the stamping and heat-treating performed on their current rotary lawn mower products. The company believes that this value-added service may have utility in other markets and enable them to leverage their capabilities beyond their current products and market.

Reaction to Eureka! Winning Ways and MEP Growth Services

"Eureka! Winning Ways was different than any other idea generation activity I've participated in. Typically those kinds of programs always make you feel good when they're done, but that energy and enthusiasm can quickly eek away with every passing day. With Eureka!, the big takeaway was a process and a common language and discipline that we can use on our own to interject new ideas and to see those ideas through to make final decisions on them.

"Now it's only a matter of time before we realize our first taste of true growth. Before Eureka! Winning Ways, growth was such an abstract term. This program makes it much more concrete and attainable."

For More Information

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